

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Vol. 1 Issue 2

March 2021

Monthly Newsletter



WELCOME...

Mayor Carbone and I are committed to creating and maintaining a vibrant community environment that inspire economic growth and attract people to the City. One component to creating a vibrant community is placemaking. Placemaking is the intentional act of creating places that attract people and strengthen their connection to the community. Placemaking pays attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

The CT Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized **Franklin Plaza** as an excellent use of outdoor space and, through a competitive process, awarded the City of Torrington with the **"2020 Placemaking Award"**, for the State of CT, in 2020.

Franklin Plaza was designed to be a civic space for events and programs, that will attract people to downtown and support the local businesses. The bold red brick, beautiful landscaping and catenary lighting has transformed this area to a picturesque place that has already captured the hearts of many.

Be sure attend one of the exciting events taking place on the Plaza, snap your next family photo or simply take stroll through downtown and see what all the buzz is about.

Sincerely,

Rista Malanca

Director of Economic Development

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Find us!



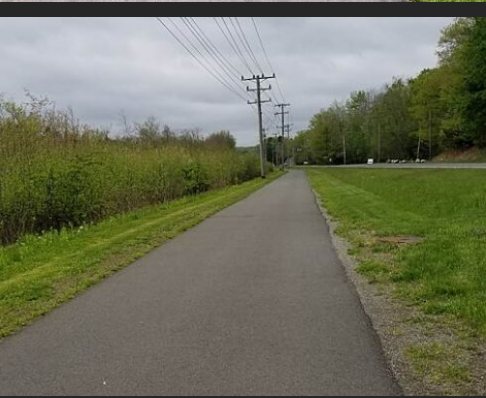
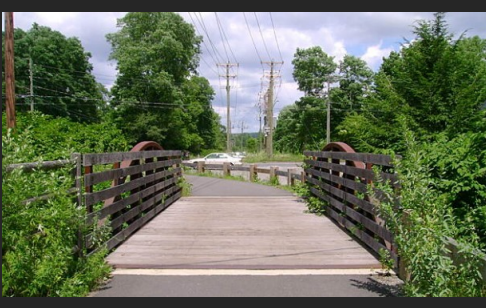
Connecticut Chapter
American Planning Association

2020 Placemaking Award

City of Torrington
Franklin Plaza

March 2021

Sue Grossman Greenway: An Economic Walkway



*Pictures taken from traillink.com

Why Do We Need Trails?

Trails Promote Health and Safety!

Trails Support the Economy

Trails Build Community

Trails Enhance Resiliency

As with many towns with an industrial heritage, the Cities of Torrington and Winsted's economy flourished in the early 19th century and demand for goods, services and housing continued to grow. The 1980s marked the de-industrialization of this area and the impact on Torrington and Winsted was devastating. Mergers, acquisitions, bankruptcies and the wholesale exodus of companies from the United States left workers jobless and its industrial complexes shuttered. Torrington and Winsted continue to struggle to recover from this devastating blow. Fortunately, research has proven that trail networks provide numerous benefits leading to economic growth, from increased property values, to more spending at local businesses.

And so, funded by the Responsible Growth and Transit-orientated Development TOD Grant, Cities of Torrington and Winsted have chosen to independently construct and design the remainder of the Sue Grossman Still River Greenway, a planned multi-use trail that will connect the two cities. The main objective for this investment has been to connect the two downtowns, improving bicyclist and pedestrian accessibility and maximizing the potential economic impact.

Extending this Greenway would provide users with easy access to many restaurants, shops and attractions in both communities. It would also traverse through high density residential areas, multiple business areas, scenic wildlife areas and local attractions, all paving the way for economic growth. So far, 3 miles of the

Greenway have been completed along Harris Drive in Torrington heading towards Winsted. While this segment has been extremely popular among pedestrians and cyclists, it does not yet connect the two city centers.

The extension of this trail has been broadly supported by both communities, and Torrington has been committed to making this happen. In 2015, Torrington held a TorringtonWalks! Charrette to encourage public participation and provide an open forum for recommendations on this project. The overwhelming response from participants was that expanding the Greenway would be a great asset to the downtown area should it utilize the existing sidewalks, bridges, and parking areas. Torrington is widely recognized as a cultural hub, buzzing with artists. The public has expressed how the trail should highlight this by including art and creative features. By extending the Greenway into the downtown area and incorporating this creativity, we can make Torrington a world class walkable city. Walkable cities attract people to the streets, allow local businesses to thrive, and promote healthy lifestyles.

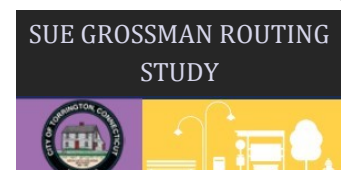
Torrington has been working diligently and collaborating with local partners to design this 5-mile extension into the city center. It is planned to follow portions of the Naugatuck River and the existing railroad corridor, linking Naugatuck River Greenway on Franklin Street to the southern terminus of the already-constructed 3-mile portion at Harris Drive.

Monthly Uses
Sue Grossman Trail Torrington



*Provided by CT Trail Census

RESOURCES





FIVE POINTS GALLERY



Mission

“To champion and nurture artists at all stages of their careers and to empower a diverse community through the presentation of inspiring exhibitions and educational initiatives.”

Our Story

The Gallery

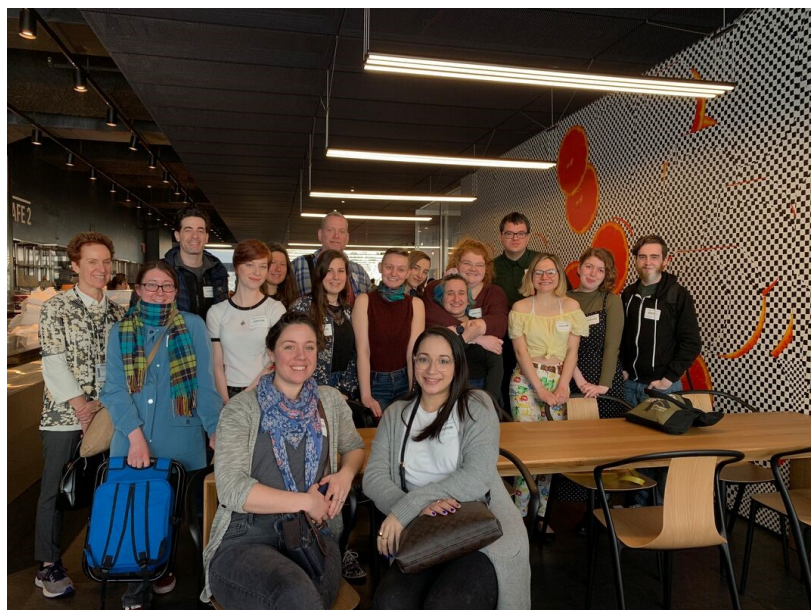
Five Points grew out of the Torrington Arts and Culture Commission's 2012 initiative, Art Space Torrington, a temporary 840 square foot summer storefront gallery located in the heart of Torrington's historic downtown district. The success of the summer initiative led to the founding of Five Points Gallery, a permanent non-profit 501(c) (3) visual arts organization dedicated to the belief that contemporary art is a vital component of human understanding. In 2013, the new gallery, named after its location at the five-point intersection in the heart of downtown Torrington, expanded to an adjacent storefront creating a contiguous 3800 square foot space composed of three beautifully renovated galleries.



Five Points Gallery

The Gallery mounts new exhibits every six weeks showcasing professional regional, national and international visual artists. Since its opening, the Gallery has exhibited over 745 artists, and boasts artists' submissions from around the globe including China, Russia, Japan, Israel, Greece, England, Denmark, Germany, France, and 49 states in the US. The guest book is similarly impressive.

Five Points Gallery's success has become symbolic of Torrington's rebirth as an arts destination. The innovative curatorial stance and commitment to excellence have made the Five Points Gallery one of Connecticut's most sought-after exhibition spaces. Art New England has lauded Five Points Gallery as "One of 4 New England Galleries Worth the Drive."



Launchpad Artists with MOMA's Ann Temkin

The Launchpad

In answer to the growing needs of art school graduates, and to encourage the cross pollination of ideas, *The Launchpad*, a strategic partnership with Hartford Art School, University of Hartford was formed in 2016. Emerging artists who have been severed from the umbilical connection of guidance, direction, community and art facilities found in a degree program, often face an uncertain future that, for the most part, has to be negotiated independently. Often working in their parents' basements or garages, many promising young artists find themselves isolated without intellectual and creative stimulation. *The Launchpad* program offers participants access to affordable shared studio spaces above Five Points Gallery, a serious arts community, mentorship, exhibition and gallery management opportunities, as well as a biennial exhibition in Five Points Gallery.

The Annex

After a complete renovation, *The Annex*, a non-juried first come first serve community pop-up gallery opened its doors in 2017.

The Annex offers *Launchpad* artists the experience of managing a professional gallery space, adding business experience and community relations to their resumes.

The Annex is available to regional artists and artisans, and provides an affordable professional space to showcase their work. Since its opening, *The Annex* has exhibited more than 400 local and regional artists and artisans. *The Annex* hosts the annual Draw-A-Thon, juried shows, school groups and other organizations.



Five Points Annex



Five Points Center for the Visual Arts

Envisioned as a dynamic fulcrum for cutting edge exploration and community driven activity, Five Points is in the process of transforming the property into a world-class art center the likes of which have not been seen before in Northwest Connecticut. Connecting emerging artists with recognized established artists will be a crucial part of the new center, namely through the Lynchpin Program, a think tank through which artists can share ideas and create thought provoking innovative art.

When the Center is fully operational artists will have access to workspaces equipped for Printmaking, Alternative Photograph Processing, Ceramics, Digital Art, Sculpture, Painting, Drawing and 3-D fabrication. The 245-seat auditorium will offer artist talks and documentaries. Visitors will be able to enroll in workshops, drop their kids off at the Children's Lab, enjoy a snack from the Café, explore the library with over 1000 publications, browse the gift shop, meditate in the Courtyard Sensory Garden, walk the Art Park's paths and trails (with four legged friends), create, explore, relax and learn! Five Points has significantly contributed to the revitalization of Torrington through the establishment of the Five Points Gallery as a premier art venue in Connecticut. Art enthusiasts are drawn to the region from all over the United States and nine countries. The Art Center is a transformative multi-year project that will further the positive impact of the arts in this area. The initiative has already drawn collaborative interest from the University of Hartford, Parsons, Rhode Island School of Design and other colleges and universities, and organizations. Supporting arts, culture and tourism is a cornerstone of Northwest Connecticut's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Art Center will attract young people to the region, create jobs, and strengthen Northwest Connecticut's identity as a center for arts innovation.

The Art Center @ University Drive

In June of 2020 after more than two years of negotiation, Five Points finalized the purchase of the former University of Connecticut Torrington Regional campus. Located 4 miles from downtown Torrington and two hours from New York and Boston, the property includes a 30,000 square foot building and 90 acres of land. When the campus opportunity came to Five Points' attention in 2018 – Judith McElhone acted.

"This came out of left field and it was so right to continue our mission to support artists and the community, and to give artists and community members the equipment, facilities and support they need to make their art."

"We want to create a new trans-disciplinary visual arts model for a changing world." Judith McElhone





WHITE DOG WOODWORKING

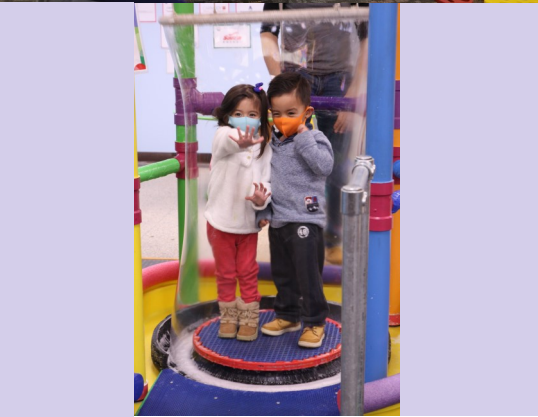
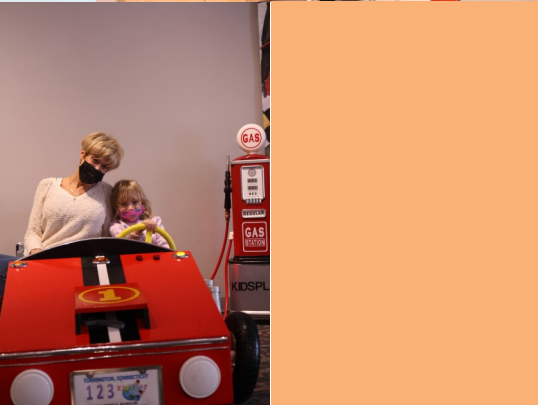
Located at 59 Field Street, White Dog is a family owned woodworking company that has been in business for 20 years. Tom Officer partnered with his son, Andy Officer, about five years ago. Originally from Litchfield, the Officers chose Torrington due to its central location and accessible industrial space. They mostly do architectural millwork for general contractors. About 80% of their projects are commercial from schools, offices, libraries, municipal buildings, and churches. The balance is made up of high end residential projects. The COVID-19 pandemic affected their work in more ways than one. Many of their projects were either delayed or shut down, including a substantial assisted living development due to outbreaks on the job. Despite the setbacks that COVID-19 unfortunately brought, they say that business has actually improved about 20-30%. To keep up with this new work and remain competitive, they have recently invested in a second workspace adjacent to their original, and new machinery like the 5x12 Biesse CNC.



Throughout his years in this business, Tom always followed his cardinal rule, “do what you say you’re going to do”. His philosophy for a well organized and successful business has always centered around his customers and paying attention to their needs. He says that in a business where the schedule is always changing, the most important thing to remember is the customer. White Dog Woodworking has customers ranging throughout CT, Western and Central MA, and parts of NY. While they have branched outside of the Litchfield area, they have been involved with a number of local projects, helping to add value to the Torrington community. Some of these projects include the recent renovation for Torrington Savings Bank’s main branch lobby and their new office addition, Brooker Memorial’s newest facility, and a few exhibition pieces for KidsPlay Museum. White Dog Woodworking has also partnered with local general contractors including Burlington Construction, PAC Group, and United Construction, and would like to acknowledge Vance Taylor real estate for his help securing their workspace.



KIDSPRAY CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



In 2012, Ken Merz, Cathy Schmitz, JoAnn Ryan, and Brian McCormick founded KidsPlay Children's Museum as a way to give back to the Torrington community and enrich the early childhood experience. KidsPlay was created with the mission to provide children with an environment that fosters imagination, creativity, and critical thinking through play-based learning.

KidsPlay is a not-for-profit organization funded in part by grants and generous donors, many of which reside in Torrington as well. KidsPlay's main gallery includes exhibits sponsored by Torrington businesses, where kids can take on variety of community roles. Kids can interact as a dentist, grocery store worker, bank teller, restaurant employee, mechanic and more. Each exhibit is designed to teach kids of the value that these roles have in our community, along with the practical skills like financial independency, customer service, and how to work well with others. The bank exhibit is relatively new, along with a tree climbing ropes course which integrates a story walk, cave writings, and a hidden constellation map. In 2017, KidsPlay opened a second gallery dedicated to STEM related activities sought to develop critical thinking skills through self-facilitated fun, educating on the science of light, motion, and more.

With the onset on COVID-19, KidsPlay has taken measures to ensure the safety of its visitors and staff. In adherence to the capacity constraints, KidsPlay has instituted timed-entry tickets where visitors can reserve an available time slot they wish to attend the museum. KidsPlay has facilitated tools to help reduce contact by creating play zones and re-organizing while still making visits just as enjoyable. KidsPlay assures that exhibits are frequently cleaned and sanitized. While the social distancing measures have maintained a safe environment for fun and discovery, staffers say the hardest drawback is not being able to see the kids engaging and learning with one another. However, they are delighted and inspired by the children's continued curiosity and resilience in spite of current conditions.

KidsPlay offers exclusive two-hour rentals for parties, and private playtimes are available for parties up to 10 people. They often transform some of their program rooms for temporary pop-up exhibits. Recently, they organized an "Out of This World" theme where children were able to practice hands-on STEM activities with their *Space Days* exhibit. Coming up soon, they are offering a week full of crazy fun activities ranging from STEM to obstacle courses, to yoga, to theatre and more with "Spring Break Unplugged".

KidsPlay will soon be breaking ground on a brand new addition at 57 Main Street. The Master Plan to transform the former Salvation Army building is currently being finalized. The 11,000 square foot museum will soon be expanded to over 19,000 square feet with the help from the Robert Rosenheim Foundation, the Seherr Thoss Foundation, and many other valuable partners.



COMING SOON TO TORRINGTON...



We are bringing another national food chain to Torrington! Scarpelli's Restaurant at 861 Migeon Avenue closed in 2019, and a gas station and convenience store is being constructed in its place. Site plan modifications have been approved to incorporate a Sonic Express inside the new gas station! Torrington is excited to be the fifth municipality in Connecticut to add a Sonic Restaurant!



*See Register Citizen Article

Following the initial outbreak of COVID-19, The Litchfield Saltwater Grille opened a secondary restaurant at their original location in Litchfield. Among the hectic times of COVID, they realized the need for quick food options and decided to offer a full takeout menu, complete with burritos, salad & grain bowls, and wraps. The idea took off and business was booming. So, the owners decided to open another Salt 2.0 restaurant here in Torrington in the Mertz building. We are eager to welcome yet another small, family-owned business to our community!

HARD AT ROAD WORK

In 2018, The City of Torrington held a referendum proposing bond allocation for infrastructure projects in response to demand from local residents and businesses. The City realized the overwhelming need to repair the deteriorating sidewalk networks and roadways in order to support public safety, and promote the protection of personal property. So, the City implemented a 5-year Pavement Management Program, which authorized the issuance of general obligation bonds and notes in the amount of \$38 million. This money was appropriated to finance road and bridge improvements and pavement projects.

Since 2019, the City has already completed 12 road projects totaling 60 roads and 18.8 miles. In 2019, we constructed the portion of the Naugatuck River Greenway as a beautiful extension of the existing Trail; and last year, we invested in the renovation of Franklin Plaza as to create a more accessible and walkable connection. Upcoming in 2021, the City plans to complete 6 more road projects totaling 44 roads and 9.5 miles. The 2021 proposed projects include the re-construction of East Main Street sidewalks, abating relevant safety concerns and increasing walkability.

2018

REFERENDUM

Construction Project Summary



A MESSAGE FROM OUR TAX COLLECTOR'S OFFICE

TAX SEASON IS AMONG US!

Who We Are

The Tax Collector's Office is responsible for the collection of payments for **Real Estate taxes, Sewer Usage Fees, Personal Property taxes and Motor Vehicle taxes**. The Tax Office takes great pride in the efficiency with which tax matters are handled. The office is responsible for thorough accounting of all records and funds administered. A courteous attitude is mandatory while upholding high standards of ethical conduct and operating in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Since 1923, the Torrington City Charter has provided for a private party to operate the tax office under contract. Under the contract, the City's service provider is obligated to pay to the City on each respective annual installment date 100% of the rate bills not paid by the respective obligor(s). The City uses this tax billing and collection method to assume that City budget requirements will be funded in a timely fashion.



What We Do

The City of Torrington operates on the fiscal year, July through June. The City's Board of Finance and other City departments, commissions and boards start working on the annual budget mid-year in January and complete it by May. Meanwhile, the assessor's office is working on the annual grand list that puts a value on all property owned in the City as set in the CT General State Statutes. This includes real property, personal property and CT registered motor vehicles.

Once the budget and grand list is set, the mill rate is created and thus our tax collection season starts July 1st. Taxpayers have the option of paying their taxes in two installments annually, July and January. Motor vehicle taxes are due annually in July with only Supplemental Motor Vehicle bills coming due in January (this is for a newly registered vehicle from the time period October 2nd through July 31st).

The W. P. C. A. sets the sewer usage rates annually for all residential, commercial, and industrial properties. The tax collector's office collects them on their behalf. These bills are also due in two installments, July and January. Please note that sewer usage is considered a utility in the law and is not subject to Freedom of Information. We have supplied every taxpayer with a special unique ID number to search their information online.

Once tax bills are generated, tax bills are mailed or hand delivered. This process relies on the post office and is never 100%. We encourage taxpayers to keep this in mind when tax season starts. If you do not receive a tax bill, please contact our office immediately.

How to Pay

ETF Check/ ACH payment:

The easiest, most convenient, most economical, and most reliable way to pay your taxes, especially during the time of COVID-19, is by an EFT Check (Electronic Check / ACH payment) online. For a fee of only \$0.95, you can eliminate the anxiety and delay of mailing your payment.

Credit/ ATM Card:

You may also pay your taxes online with a credit, debit, or ATM card for a fee of 2.95%.

Mail:

You may pay by mail as well. Use the envelope we provide with your bill during our collection months of July and/or January or send your payment to our office at City of Torrington Tax Collector, 140 Main Street, Room 134, Torrington, CT 06790. **We also have a new drop box at City Hall as well!** It is located to the left of the door on the south side of the building at the top of the handicap entrance. **NO CASH PLEASE!!**

Please Make an Appointment!

Please call ahead so we can give you the amount you owe so you can be prepared with a payment option ahead of time. We can possibly help you figure out a way to not come into the office as a way to not put yourself or us at any further risk during these trying times. Our window is open but you must wear a mask or face shield.

BUSINESS RESOURCES

COVID-19 RESOURCES



Betsy Paynter



Join us for an interactive panel discussion with experienced startups as they share their knowledge and first-hand experience with market research and access to capital. Learn about investigating industry trends, setting up competitors, creating an ideal customer profile and choosing the right research methods for your business venture. We will explore source of capital including traditional loans, RA and CT government programs, and specialized financing options.

Guest Panelists include: **Hope Ross Gibaldi** - Founder of Learn in Motion and Community Engagement Manager at Valley Venture Mentors; **Heather Johnson**, MBA - CEO of Gozynto, LLC; **Ashlee DeBacco** - Founder of TrueTale and Co-Founder at Capti Media Company; **Robert Torres** - Managing Partner at 302 Interactive.



Our Moderator, **John Fenelec**, is an adjunct business development instructor for Northwestern CT Community College and startup mentor for early-stage startups in the region, serving for-profit and non-profit entrepreneurs. He is also the founder of RecordME.co, a startup changing the way music and other content is delivered to fans. With a background in music, touring, production, and recording, he previously co-founded The John Samuel Group, LLC with his wife, Kari.

Sponsored by



Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce

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CT Small Business Development Center

COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Sites

Torrington Area Health District



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



State of Connecticut Webpage



Hartford Healthcare

